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ABSTRACT

The presentation outlined in this paper provides: (1) a brief account of the conception, initiation, and implementation of a bibliographic instruction program to serve all freshman students, and to serve such special populations as international and minority freshmen; (2) an outline of the general characteristics of each category of students, the type of services and skills they require, and the methods used to organize and deliver information to them; (3) a description of the functions of librarians in bridging the gap between the students and departments, and the library; and (4) a discussion of the role of the librarian in helping students develop skills for acquiring, processing, and using information independently. At the suggestion of the Faculty Senate, librarians approached the English Department with a proposal to provide formal library instruction through English classes. The English Department accepted the proposal, and the program described in this paper began in 1983. The general focus of the instruction is a guided tour of the library and coverage of basic library tools: the card catalog, general reference materials (e.g., encyclopedias, handbooks, and yearbooks), abstracts and indexes, and periodicals. (THC)

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION FOR FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

made by

H. MINNIE DUNBAR

to the

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE
FEBRUARY 18, 1986

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SC

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION FOR FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Relating the bibliographic instruction program to the conference theme: Involving and Retaining the Classes of the 1990s.

In teaching strategies for independent and continuous use of the various services and resources, the Florida International University (FIU) programs emphasize small group and individualized sessions. This approach promotes student participation by encouraging dialogue and by focusing attention on the specific concerns of the student. The method enhances a learning process aimed at helping students develop and use proper research skills. Mastery of these skills sets the tone for approaching other unfamiliar areas.

As students gain confidence in their ability to cope with one major facet of the institution--the library--they proceed to meet other challenges with increased self-assurance. The feeling of accomplishment gotten from the positive experience of tailored library instruction imparts an attractive image of the library, hence of the institution. The resultant "good feeling" in turn, helps neutralize or diminish experiences which contribute to alienation and subsequent withdrawal from the institution.

This presentation will cover:

1. A brief account of the conception, initiation and implementation of a program to serve all freshman students, and to serve such special populations as international and minority freshmen.

2. An outline of the general characteristics of each category of students, the type of services and skills they require, and the methods used to organize and deliver information to them.

3. A description of the functions of librarians in bridging the gap between the students and departments, and the library.

4. A discussion of the role of the librarian in helping students develop skills for acquiring, processing and using information independently.

I. Initiation of the Florida International University library instruction program resulted chiefly out of the lack of a uniform means for informing students and faculty about available library resources and services.

   At the suggestion of the Faculty Senate, librarians approached the English Department with a proposal to provide formal library instruction through English classes. Following several meetings of librarians and faculty, the English department consented to include a library instruction component in the the freshman English program.

The program began in the fall of 1983 with librarians conducting at least two sessions of second semester English. The general focus of the instruction is a guided tour and coverage of basic library tools: the card catalog, general reference materials (encyclopedias,handbooks, yearbooks, and so on) abstracts and indexes and periodicals.

Library instruction to beginning freshman English classes is optional, depending upon the wishes of the instructor. However, students are strongly encouraged to take a self-guided taped tour as an introduction to the library.

Noting that minority and international students could benefit from additional instruction, the library representative to the offices of minority and international student affairs arranged to provide supplementary instruction through those offices.

Certain observations indicate that FIU library operates a successful program.

1. Study guides are in high demand. The materials cover specific issues, subjects or aspects of the library and of research. Students can therefore select the guides which address their specific needs. They may also make suggestions for additional guides.

2. The individualized or small group sessions held following lectures minimize the reservation to use "unfamiliar" or unusual materials or equipment. More students now use microforms, computers, subject-specific abstracts and indexes with little or no urgings.

3. Lower division students are becoming independent and sophisticated library users as shown by reference questions asked. It is not unusual for a freshman to request an index other than Readers Guide to fulfil a research assignment.

4. Comments from professors and students indicate that such services as the term paper workshops and individualized consultation have resulted in better understanding of the research process---and better grades.

5. More referrals are made by advisors and counselors.

6. Additional workshops are requested for minority and international students.

7. Library representatives get invited to departmental or unit meetings and to more orientation programs to talk about library resources and services.

II. Generalizations about the nature of FIU freshmen--based on personal observation.

1. Their concept of the scope of a library relates chiefly to size of building and number of books. Freshmen do not consider the availability and use of services and nonbook or nonprint resources.

2. Freshmen come with little or no library or research experience; as such they require a lot of guidance.

3. They are more responsive to thorough library instruction very early in the term when everything is still very unfamiliar.

4. Freshmen generally do not know what to do with a variety of materials. They are comfortable with a single book which contains everything they need to know about the subject or topic.

5. They are quite anxious to learn shortcuts to library research.

6. They want to know what will help them complete a specific assignment; they usually are not interested in the how's or why's of research.

7. They will use specific services (e.g. interlibrary loan) or collections (e.g. government documents) if they are made aware of them well in advance and taught how to use them.

Minority students are:

8. Sensitive to the manner in which they are assisted.

9. Hesitant to admit they are first time or limited users and therefore need assistance.

10. Responsive to direct correspondence informing them that assistance is granted by a specific librarian.

11. Apt to call upon a librarian whom they perceive as providing the most assistance in the most satisfying manner.

12. Desirous of being assured that a librarian has adequate amount of time to spent in individualized consultation.

13. Usually prepared with questions about library or about specific assignments when in small groups or individualized consultation.

14. Apt to recommend "helpful" librarians to other students.

15. Anxious to help other students use the library.

16. Desirous of having information readily available and visible when needed to complete a specific assignment.

International students:

17. Language barrier makes it difficult to keep up with lectures or group activities.

18. They hesitate to ask questions or take part in discussions for fear they may appear unintelligent.

19. They have problems locating resources and services in the library, chiefly because they are not always aware that those resources and services are available. They also may not be familiar with the lay-out of the library.

20. They sometimes have problem with terminology. They do not know what to ask for because they do not know what the object, concept, service or resource is called.

21. The U.S. system is unfamiliar. Many students admit they have done little or no library research, or have had to use no resource other than their textbooks and class notes and lectures.

22. They are responsive to instruction in social and communications skills which will improve their interaction with library staff.

23. They want to learn about the library early in the term, sometimes before they know they have a library assignment.

24. They will return for assistance when they have specific assignments.

25. usually one thorough walk through the library will familiarize them with its layout.

26. Many international students want to take notes while on tour or during consultation.

27. They are very responsive to lectures, seminars or workshops sponsored by the Office of International Student Affairs.

28. More International students return to say "thank you" than any other group of students.

Basic Skills required by all students:

- o Location and use of library collections
- o Use of card catalogs, abstracts and indexes, reference materials, nonprint/nonbook materials, and so on.
- o Careful note taking
- o Use of library services
- o Documenting
- o Formulation of questions for library staff
- o Organizing and synthesizing information
- o Reporting research findings in clear, cohesive, coherent manner.

Organizing materials for freshman students:

- o Provide brief, simple, easy-to-follow guide on the various facets of the library.
- o Provide handouts they can refer to during or following a lecture, tour, workshop, and so on.
- o Provide introductory information through brochures, tours, films, etc.
- o Give students a glossary of library terms.
- o Present materials from simple to complex; from familiar to unfamiliar.

Delivering information: Instruction is provided to freshman students in the following formats:

- o Brief statements at orientation programs
- o Self guided taped tours
- o Guided tours conducted by librarians
- o Formal instruction in freshman English classes
- o Lectures given by librarians invited to classroom by professors
- o Small group workshops in term paper writing, use of specific resources, etc.
- o Individualized consultation

Minority students respond better to:

- o Small group workshops
- o Individualized consultation
- o Detailed instruction on use of specific resource or service
- o Referral by advisors

Generally, for minority students, materials and information about services must be visible and available in critical areas (e.g. with counselors).

International students:

- o Require a good deal of instruction in background information that will help them understand key concepts and terminology necessary for library research.
- o They respond well to:
  - o All services performed especially for them
  - o Lectures sponsored by the Office of International Student Affairs
  - o Individualized consultation

III. Functions of library representatives:

- o Inform academic or service units about available library resources and and about new trends in the library.
- o Establish contact with all new faculty
- o Contact all faculty at least once a term
- o Suggest special types of instruction for students
- o Prepare special bibliographies or guides
- o Provide library orientation for faculty, staff, and students
- o Know of availability and functions of other services to which students may be referred (e.g. writing lab)
- o Conduct sessions on various aspects of library research or arrange to have them conducted.

IV. Role of librarians in helping freshman students develop research skills:

- o Expand their concept of the library by informing them of the availability and use of the wide variety of resources and services.
- o familiarize them with the physical layout of the library by encouraging them to take tours, browse, read signs, ask questions.
- o Allay the fear of the unfamiliar by telling them the contents and functions of each department, prompting them to examine the card catalogs, use computers, microforms, abstracts and indexes, and so on.
- o Help students define their expectations of librarians and the library by explaining librarians' responsibilities, capabilities and limitations, and the limitations of the library.
- o Encourage intellectual exchange by having students read and interpret their own library or research assignments, and then tell the librarian what they want.
- o Facilitate the use of special sources by encouraging students to carefully read and follow instructions for using them.
- O Teach them specific conventions and rules for collecting, recording, and reporting information.